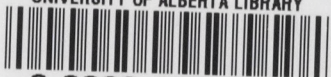


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WESTERN THEATRE

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ON THE COVER:

A DOCTOR IN SPITE OF HIMSELF, by Molière. *Murray Edwards and Francis Hyland* (of Saskatchewan's travelling players) as "Sganarelle" and "Martine." Production designed by *Frank Holroyd* and directed by *Emrys Jones*. (See page 9.)

One dollar a year for four issues, post free. Twenty-five cents a copy, postage 5c extra. Subscriptions should be made payable to the University of Alberta and addressed to "Western Theatre," Department of Extension, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alta.

The editors will be glad to receive news of theatre events in western Canada and articles on general or practical topics, especially from members of active theatre groups, teachers and students. Photos, drawings, set and costume designs are particularly welcome, also letters containing news or criticism, whether intended for publication or not.

EDITORIAL OFFICE: DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA,
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ABRAHAM AND ISAAC, medieval mystery at the University of Alberta's Summer Session Theatre Workshop, 1948. "Isaac," Helen Kennedy; "Abraham," Emery Gruninger; designed by Margaret McDonough; directed by Robert Orchard. (See page 18.)

Introducing "Western Theatre"

In our huge and relatively empty country it is easy to feel isolated, particularly if we wish to practice the Art of Theatre. Only at rare intervals, such as regional or Dominion drama festivals is this feeling momentarily submerged in the excitement of meeting with people who "breathe" the same enthusiasm; and this is even more true of western Canada than eastern. Spread thinly around our four provinces are some hundreds of people wanting to do something in the way of theatre and finding that they have many problems in common. It would be a fine thing if they would meet together once in awhile for mutual encouragement.

We hope that this magazine will in some measure be a substitute for the impossible and prove to be in effect a meeting place "on paper" where all significant theatre work in the west can be made known: that it will bring to the attention of the west much of the relevant work that is being done in the east and in other countries: that it will provide a forum for discussion and controversy and for the informative exchange of ideas: in short that the main advantage of a good conference will be made available to a wide number of participants four times a year.

It was during a session of the Western Canada Theatre Conference that the tentative plans for this magazine were evolved. This was nearly a year ago; their practical fulfilment has been slower than anticipated. But the first issue is at last a reality. It only remains to broaden the enthusiasm of the conference at Banff into the support of theatre people generally.

Of all the factors that came together to make this magazine a possibility the foremost is undoubtedly the recent growth of Alberta's magazine "Stage Door." Under the editorship first of Sidney Risk and then of Elsie Park Gowan it began to be apparent that much of the material in "Stage Door" was of interest throughout the west. We who are in a sense their successors would like to take this opportunity of thanking them for their splendid work.

It was not, however, until the University of Alberta permitted "Stage Door" to be expanded into "Western Theatre" with all the financial backing of the former publication that the way was opened up. We wish to express our gratitude for their generosity and broadmindedness. We hope that Alberta will stand to gain by such a move, not only because we expect that "Western Theatre" will eventually be self-supporting, but because a wider field means more varied and valuable material with which to fill its pages.

Although in large measure "Western Theatre" has grown out of favourable conditions in one of the provinces we hope that no one province will play a dominating role and that a truly representative organisation will come to establish itself in control of policy and management. We shall be "feeling our way" for some time and very anxious to hear from all those interested in the theatre as to whether or not we are doing the job they would like us to be doing. We say to these people, "support us with your advice as well as with your subscriptions."

An Adjudicator

Reports

Robert Stuart

In January, 1948, I was privileged, as Adjudicator of the Regional Drama Festivals, to set forth on a journey that was to take me from New Brunswick to British Columbia. On this journey from coast to coast I saw the work of about five hundred actors in seventy-two plays.

I set out with some fear and trembling in my heart, not by any means comforted or reassured by the contradictory advice and warning given me by friends and others who were more in the know than I was about patterns of behaviour in Adjudicators. I had never adjudicated a play in my life. Furthermore, all my experience of theatre had been gained as a professional worker in the professional theatre; my experience of non-professional actors and production was, to say the least, limited. I felt myself to be quite inadequate for the job; less from a lack of knowledge of theatre and criticism (of which I have opinions held as strongly as the next man) than from a total ignorance of what was expected of me. What I needed to know most urgently was the kind of approach I must use. Just how seriously did these non-professional groups take themselves? What was even more to the point, just how seriously did they expect me to take them. Over and over again I had heard the claim that the amateur movement in Canada has taken over the work abandoned by the professionals: that the Little Theatres have kept the breath of life in the living theatre. If that boast should prove true could I be fearlessly truthful in my criticism; could I look for those standards in acting and presentation which I felt the plays demanded, and praise or blame in proportion to the achievement of those standards? Or must I take the conventional view that amateur actors don't like to hear the truth about themselves; to believe those cynical friends who insisted that I was expected to play the benign critic, perpetually astonished by the skill displayed in every performance I saw, to be moved to public anguish by having to decide which plays should receive the various awards and making non-committal judgements so that those who did not receive trophies should feel no regret?

I am a kindly man by nature. I do not find it easy to be fearlessly truthful when by being so I hurt the feelings of others. In the ordinary way I am more than prepared to be non-committal in order to avoid acrimonious argument, but at the same time I am foolish enough to believe that theatre is of vast importance in the world and that bad work in the theatre, whether it stems from inexperience or from downright incompetence, should be blamed and castigated as heartily as good work should be praised. If the amateur movement really believed that it was keeping the living theatre in Canada from total extinction then, I felt, it would welcome honest criticism. For right or wrong, therefore, I was determined that any word of mine either of praise or blame that could be uttered in defence of good theatre should and would be uttered. So, with a copy of George Jean Nathan's *Advice To a Young*

Critic in my pocket, and the high hope in my heart that my efforts might strike a blow for better theatre in the world (I was ever an optimistic man), I went forth to adjudicate the Regional Festivals.

I cannot now remember what I expected to find on my tour, but I am safe in saying that no matter what I expected I was not in the least surprised by what I found. That I should be by turns both delighted and disappointed to the point of acute embarrassment seems most logical in retrospect. The blow I hoped to strike for a better theatre in the world fell, alas, for the most part on a body incapable of feeling. What my auditors wanted to hear was not helpful criticism but praise. They wanted praise and, if possible, a prize. In this the Canadian amateur actor is by no means unique. It seems that the same can be said of almost any amateur anywhere. And why limit this criticism to the amateur? Your professional is equally guilty and equally resentful: the difference is only in degree. The professional resents criticism not nearly so much because his livelihood may be affected (which in one sense is to his credit) as because he feels his artistry has been slighted, misunderstood—perhaps wilfully misunderstood. The amateur and the professional are at one in supposing that a criticism is a personal thing. Criticism of a characterisation, they feel (quite wrongly), is a criticism of themselves, their looks, their voices, their personalities, their spirit; a rejection of themselves *in toto*. There is, perhaps, some excuse for the professional resenting criticism. He has devoted himself to a career in art: his life, presumably, is spent in perfecting his artistry. Criticism of his abilities can be tolerated when delivered by a fellow-artist who knows as much about the art as he does himself; but, he feels (quite rightly) criticism is a mere impertinence when delivered by a journalist or a lay-man who knows little, if anything, about theatre and acting. The amateur, on the other hand, has not devoted himself exclusively to a career in art. Most of his working day is spent in some other business and he uses the theatre only in those hours that are not devoted to the earning of his living. For the amateur to resent criticism from a fellow-artist seems to me to be a most peculiar state of affairs. So peculiar that I think it warrants looking into.

First of all, does the average amateur really feel he is the breath of life in the living theatre? It is my considered opinion that he does not. There are one or two isolated groups who may: groups who consider themselves advanced, whose work is sometimes excellent enough to bear comparison with the best in professional theatre. But these groups do not represent one per cent of the total activities about which I am writing. The average amateur group is a chaotic affair, moving from production to production in a nightmare of inefficiency, following anything but a planned route. Most of them work enthusiastically, some with religious fervour, all of them (including the advanced groups) in splendid isolation. Their cause is not truly that of the theatre. Few of them attempt to contribute anything other than a second-hand copy of a professional performance. Their motives seem to be no more than the propagation of their own group and their own pleasure. Amateurs, as a body, rarely look beyond themselves. They are too busy to attend the productions of other groups; they devote little or no time to studying theatre methods or to wider reading in drama. The living theatre would very soon be quite dead if it had to rely on the average amateur actor

who has no interest in productions other than those in which he is directly concerned.

This is a dreary picture of the generalities. It will be rejected by those groups I have referred to as advanced. They are special cases and are outside the general picture. And again I must say that there is nothing peculiarly Canadian in this general state of the movement. The same things can be said of the amateur movement in the States and in Britain. In Britain there are at least three organisations striving to co-ordinate the work done by amateurs. It is a significant fact that out of the thirty thousand flourishing groups established there, less than five thousand are affiliated to these three organisations.

There is, of course, some professional theatre activity in Canada, but it is so limited, so localised, that for all practical purposes in this essay we may say that it is non-existent. This is a melancholy fact much to be deplored, but it seems to leave the amateur movement singularly unaffected. Just how the amateur movement might take advantage of the clear field thus left open and still remain an amateur movement is difficulty to say. It is all too easy to fall into the error of blaming the amateur for not doing a job that can be done only by the professional. In most cases the amateur doesn't want to try. What, then, does this widespread movement represent? What is it that prompts a man to become a member of a play producing group? A hobby? A psychological reaction to the lack of colour in his life? Exhibitionism? John Bourne, writing on the movement in Britain, says it would be safe to include all three reasons, "although . . . fairer to admit that the exhibitionism is largely unconscious. The amateur actor does not air himself in public any more than the professional, except that, because of his immaturity his appearance is less justified. But it cannot be denied . . . he also finds enjoyment in bringing to life—more or less—the characters of a playwright's imagining. That may be very good for him, as well as for the playwright who needs must live. Indeed, if the theory is accepted that much of modern life is humdrum and mechanical, it may help to adjust the mental balance of our amateur actor to give him another personality for a few hours now and again. Whether this correcting process should be undertaken in public is another matter. It is the writer's contention that many amateur performances should take place with the curtain *down*."

How far-reaching is the effect of an average group? How far can they influence an audience? The answer to both is not very far. It would be more accurate to say that a group is much more influenced by its audience than *vice-versa*. The average group presents never more than two full length plays a year. They are chosen usually by a committee who have to keep an eye on a surprising number of points that will disqualify a play for production. The committee must know the potential audience very well indeed—its tastes, reactions to previous productions, fads and fancies, taboos and so on. The quality of the play is a very secondary matter—indeed, if my experience of adjudicating at the Regional Festivals and since is to be believed, the quality of the play is not even considered. Racine, Corneille, and Regnard were represented in the Regional Festivals by French-speaking groups, but the English-speaking groups came no nearer the classics than Shaw and early O'Neill. The classics, Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, Restoration and modern poetic plays are mostly ignored. Modern plays, prefer-

ably comedies that have had long runs on Broadway or Shaftesbury Avenue are mostly in demand.

Advanced groups are by no means above reproach in this. They, too, play safe and do their utmost to give their audiences the mixture that pleased before. True, if one is presenting six productions each season there is bound to be some variation in the pattern, but the variation from year to year is very slight. Box offices must be considered. A bold experiment may mean a drop in ticket sales so they go on, year after year, playing polite little plays to polite little people. Occasionally an unusual play is slipped in between two sure-fire successes and it gets carried along in the momentum, but those good souls on the committees who sponsored the choice hold their collective breath and cross their fingers hard until the danger point has been passed. To be perfectly fair, the ordinary diet offered by the advanced groups while it mostly makes dull eating, is never so lacking in vitamins as that of the average groups.

Plays with a "nasty" tone are out. Plays that call for unusual staging are out—the "ideal" play calls for only one set and that an interior. Plays with a social bias or political trend are condemned, but sadism and sex, nicely cloaked, often, surprisingly enough, pass the unofficial censorship; presumably because the readers were too nice-minded to see the point.

In the hierarchy of these things, plays, it would seem, are handed down, like an older brother's clothing, from the current commercial theatre. So far from being tailored to fit the new wearer, the stage directions which come with the play are followed slavishly and the new wearer tries to fit his contours to the original owner's impress with appallingly uninspired results. Such groups know nothing of creative work; they can only follow printed directions as if a play were a recipe for paregoric.

The advanced groups can be left to their own devices. They have usually a long term plan of action which is followed more or less faithfully. They have experienced members (some with professional experience) whose love of good theatre and good taste acts as a leavening ingredient in the general mixture. My concern is for the small groups, the average and below average groups who have no experienced members, no background and no sense of direction. They need help and direction. Sometimes an advanced group will adopt one of these smaller groups, lend them materials and costumes, technicians and directors; but such intimate interrelationship is not enough to meet the enormous requirements of all the smaller groups throughout the Dominion.

In Canada we have no central body, no organised clearing-house that can be appealed to for help and direction. The only time we federate is for the practical purpose of the Dominion Drama Festival. The Governors of the Dominion Drama Festival maintain that it is not their responsibility to co-ordinate the activities of the various groups scattered across the Dominion. They consider that their duty begins and ends with maintaining a continuity of the festival as established by Lord Bessborough. But if this festival is to have any meaning, if it is to contribute anything to the cultural life of the nation, some extra attention will have to be paid to the movement which supports it. It is not enough that a few groups should be selected once a year to participate in an event which is half festival—half competition. Some care must be taken, some

vigorous help must be offered these groups if only to maintain some sort of standard at the festival. We need a central office from which advice can be sought, direction appealed for. We need a central library service. We need a responsible panel of adjudicators and teachers set up in every Province. Much of this work is already being done by the Universities but the responsibility of the University ends with the boundaries of its Province. Such an organisation would be self-supporting as is the British Drama League, which supplies similar services to all its affiliated members in Britain. It may be that the support for such an organization would not be as widespread or as wholehearted as one might wish (as is the case with the organisations in Britain), but that does not minimise the need or the usefulness of such an organisation.

The Drama Festival is both beneficial and dangerous. It does, without doubt, encourage a more critical attitude towards plays, acting and directing—even though that attitude be no more critical than a guess at what kind of play will please the Adjudicator. It brings the competing groups out of their isolation and forces them to take note of the work of other groups. By having public adjudications it causes the audience to set a standard for criticism. On the other hand, it does encourage a competitive spirit. Most important of all, it encourages the judgement of a thing of the spirit (as all acting must be) in terms of material marks. It unduly elates the winners and depresses the losers. It is my fervent hope that the Dominion Drama Festival will long continue to flourish, since I believe the attendant dangers are offset by the benefits, but I wish just as fervently that the competitive element could be dropped. If I had my way, all the cups, bowls, plaques, shields and certificates would be put into a sack and dropped in the St. Lawrence. It might then be possible for us to pride ourselves on having a Drama Festival where dramatic art dominates and not a feverish air of speculation as to which group is most likely to win.





—Photo: Courtesy of Star-Phoenix, Saskatoon.

Saskatchewan's Travelling Theatre

Emrys Maldwyn Jones

(This article, written in the fall of last year, describes the University of Saskatchewan's first year in promoting a travelling theatre. Encouraged by its well-merited success, Professor Jones early set about organising this summer's production of which an account will be given in a future issue of "Western Theatre."—Ed.)

In the spring of 1948 the Drama Department at the University of Saskatchewan set up an organization called the Stage Society for the purpose of producing that Department's plays and to further the production of good plays throughout the province. The Stage Society undertook a summer tour of Saskatchewan, which proved successful in its first season.

There were eight members of the touring company, all of them students and graduates in Drama from the University of Saskatchewan. Each of these students, besides acting in the two plays, also attended to all other tasks of the tour, such as scene shifting, costuming, lighting, box office, advertising, etc. Each member of the company played at least one role, some of them playing as many as four. Although the men stuck to the same role throughout the tour, the women took turns in playing each of the female parts. This contributed to their own freshness and to the freshness of the productions. The actors were paid a guaranteed wage of \$25 a week plus travelling and subsistence costs.

The plays performed were a modernized version of Moliere's *A Doctor In Spite of Himself* and the *Pyramus and Thisbe* scenes involving the artisans in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. While some people were kept away from the theatre by the seeming scholarliness of these titles, the attendance was generally very good and those who attended the plays were enthusiastic in their appreciation. Of the two plays, perhaps the latter was the more popular.

During the season proper, which ran from May 25th to September 8th with two holidays of one week each, 72 performances were given in cities, towns, and villages from as far south as the American border to as far north as Meadow Lake and Flin Flon. Early in October an extra five performances were given in Saskatoon for the city public schools and high schools and University students. Proceeds from these extra performances were given in the form of a bonus to each member of the company.

The settings and stage equipment, designed by Frank Holroyd of the university's Drama Department, were carried in a luggage rack on top of a Ford station wagon and in a half-ton trailer. The eight members of the company were accommodated in the station wagon. Settings and lighting and costumes were specially designed to give the best possible visual effect in colour and variety, while at the same time fitting into the minimum space for transportation. On each stage a cyclorama of neutral coloured drapes was hung and sets of folding screens painted in various designs on each side were placed in front of these surrounding drapes. These screens were so designed as to make possible four completely different scenic effects. The required furniture and other properties such as benches, logs, stumps and mounds of earth were achieved through the use of specially designed packing boxes in which all equipment was carried. Various painted throws were used to cover these boxes, arranged in different groupings with excellent effect.

As a result of this careful planning the only property the company had to borrow in each town was one office-type armchair. All of the lighting equipment was carried in a box about the size of a coffin and was especially designed by Mr. Holroyd so that complete effects and flexibility in colour quality and direction could be achieved on either the smallest or the largest stages. This lighting equipment was also provided with its own switchboard and dimmers. There is little doubt that any better and more colourful visual presentation of plays had ever been seen in many of the towns visited.

During the first few weeks of the tour a flat admission price of 75c was charged; but, in order to make it easier for younger people to attend, and because the tour was doing well financially, admission was reduced for the greater part of the itinerary to a flat charge of 50c and, in some cases 25c (for students). The only other source of income was from advertisements in the program, which was an eight page affair printed in sufficient quantity for complete distribution.

The tour used no local sponsors but simply had one or two people in each town undertake to put up posters and, in a few cases, to place tickets advantageously for advance sales. The advance sales, however, were hardly worth the trouble involved.



—Photo: Courtesy of Star-Phoenix, Saskatoon.

Peter Jaenicke as "Bottom" as "Pyramus," Murray Edwards as "Snout" as "Wall," Frank Bueckert as "Flute" as "Thisbe."

The chief item of advertising was a half-sheet poster printed in three colours by a firm well known for its service printing. This was distributed in quantity to each town and surrounding village from head office. Small advertisements were also placed in local country weeklies and in the larger dailies. In a few of the larger towns mimeographed postcard notices were sent to householders. All of the commercial radio stations were most generous in their free publicity, giving us daily spot announcements from the beginning to the end of the tour free of charge. The Saskatoon Star-Phoenix and the Regina Leader-Post were also most generous, each of them giving us several large spreads, printing many photographs and accepting most of the frequent smaller announcements we gave them. Indeed, the tour would not have been the success it was without the warm and generous co-operation of these people and the many business firms in Saskatoon who supported us.

B.C. WINS DOMINION DRAMA FESTIVAL PLAQUE



The two entries from the west in the finals of the Dominion Drama Festival held in Toronto last April made a very good showing. The Vagabond Players of New Westminster won the Festival Plaque for the best performance in English, exclusive of the one awarded the Bessborough Trophy. Their production of Tennessee Williams' "The Glass Menagerie," directed by Ian Dobbie, won special acclaim for its staging. "A remarkably faithful reproduction of Tennessee Williams' intentions" said the Adjudicator, Philip Hope-Wallace, drama critic of the Manchester Guardian.

Hopes were high for the entry from Calgary, Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler," presented by Workshop 14. Robert Speight's adjudication of the performance at the Alberta regional festival in March was lavish in praise, and he is reported to have found it the most outstanding of any of the plays he sent on to the finals. Albertans were naturally disappointed that "Workshop" was unable to coax at least one of the awards out of Mr. Hope-Wallace, though he termed the performance "exciting," the acting "magnificent," and commended the excellent understanding of the play shown both by the actors and by the director, Miss Betty Mitchell.

"The Glass Menagerie" and "Hedda Gabler" are both very difficult plays to perform, as the adjudicator pointed out. It is highly commendable that our two groups from the west were able to aim so high and make so good an impression.

The elegant lady on the left is from Workshop's striking program for "Hedda Gabler".

HIGH SCHOOL THEATRE

"Alice in Wonderland"

A Symposium by Heads of Departments
in Production

Edited by

Margaret Waldie and Vivian Walline
Western Canada High School, Calgary

The illustrations on pages 13, 14, and 15,
are from Western Canada High School's
production of "Alice in Wonderland."



(Last year, Western Canada High School Drama Students, under the direction of their teacher, Miss Betty Mitchell, presented their own adaptation of "Alice in Wonderland." Having been impressed by the quality of the production we thought that our readers might be interested in knowing just how it was done, so we wrote to Miss Mitchell for details. The following is an account, written by the boys and girls themselves, of how they tackled the production.—Ed.)

Down, down, down, down . . . falling, falling, falling, falling . . . into the realm of the unreal. Follow Alice into a strange world inhabited by odd people, where imaginative creatures fascinate and charm her. This was the challenge received and accepted by the Drama students of Western Canada High School when they undertook to perform *Alice in Wonderland*.

It is the practice of these students to present an annual production and this year their choice lay between Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. Alice was chosen because of its large cast which gave acting opportunities to many of the two hundred drama students. When the annual production had been definitely decided upon, the various committees began to function.

THE PORTRAYAL OF ALICE by Kathlyn Ketchem.

It was necessary to give Alice a "backbone" or some definite character beyond that of an ordinary seven-and-a-half year old. The two girls playing Alice learned from Lewis Carroll that she was not all sweetness and light, but she had a quick little temper as well. He also told something of her disconcerting logic. The girls had to create a believable characterization from the fabric of her dream and the facts of her childhood. Research built them a picture of all the details that shape a little girl's personality, and soon Alice became as real to them as though she had not died an old lady, a short while ago. Knowing something about the beautiful garden where she must have played, the handsome residence of Dean Liddell at Oxford where she grew up, the number



of brothers and sisters she had, all helped them in presenting *Alice in Wonderland* intelligently.

MASKS by Jim Gorril.

For actors portraying such characters as the Mock Turtle, the Gryphon and the March Hare, masks took the place of stage make-up. Designs for the masks were made from the original Tenniel drawings. In the mak-

ing of the masks, clay moulds were shaped as casts. The masks themselves were made from gluing four to six layers of paper together with wet with glue, but hardened when left to dry. Felt hats to fit the actors were wired inside the masks to enable the actors to have some control over the larger than human heads. The masks were painted and, in order to help the actors project their voices, megaphones were attached inside them.

SET DESIGN by Bob Page.

To the modern theatre group, set designing poses an enormous problem. The set must create the mood of the play, harmonize with the production angle, be expressive and yet simple. In *Alice* the great number of continuous scenes, each very different from the last, presented a challenge. First of all the set designers talked over the sequence of scenes with the Director. It was decided that the Tenniel drawings would be used as the basis of the design, but they had to be created on a large scale and in colour.

After the sets were constructed, a method of moving them in and out was evolved by the use of two slip stages which came onto the stage alternately. These were used for all scenes except the *Croquet* and *Trial* scenes, both of which, because of the larger number of characters, needed more room.

LIGHTING by Jim Duncan.

The lighting problem for *Alice* was a difficult one. Owing to the fact that there was a great deal of action taking place on the down stage area, it was useless to divide it into set lighting areas. The two slip stages were lettered "A" and "B" in the floor plans. By means of cross-lighting these with rose and steel-blue gelatine the desired effect was attained. The centre stage was illuminated by two more spots, blue and white, which harmonized with "A" and "B" stage lights. The "pool of tears" was accomplished by moving a cardboard cut-out over a rose parabolic flood. This was also lighted by a blue spot, giving a reasonable water effect. The "Trial Scene" up-stage was done with a combination of floods and strip-lights. The lighting cues and changes were numerous and fast and could not have been accomplished without the full co-operation and co-ordination of every lighting technician.

PROPERTIES by Jane Wilson.

As with the other groups, an organization meeting was held at the beginning of the term to list the number of people available for work and to get particulars of where and when they might be reached. Each person was given a list of articles to obtain before the actual nights of

the play. They were told, "If you can't beg or borrow the articles on your list, make them out of papier maché, old socks, shoes or shirts, cotton stuffing or anything else you can think of as suitable." During the nights of the production the thousand and one properties were distributed when needed and the crew made a success of its efforts.

COSTUMES by *Laura Bailey.*

No great amount of money was put out for costumes, as most things were designed and made by the costumers. Designs for the costumes were taken from the Tenniel drawings. One of the student artists copied the pictures of the principal characters from the book, showing colours and three dimensions. The costumers took over from there, with the help of most of the girl students. Many actresses worked on their own costumes to assist the over-worked costume mistresses. The materials bought were very cheap and many costumes were made from old costumes already owned by the Drama classes. The soldiers, courtiers and children wore cards made from stiffened oilcloth, painted with numbers on the front and card-pack designs on the back. Tights were made from underwear dyed red and black. White ruffs were made from buckram. The dainty blue dresses of the two Alices were hand made as were the elaborate costumes of the Queen of Hearts, and the Red and White Queens. The outfits of the two schoolboys, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, were made realistic by liberal amounts of stuffing, while the Duchess wore a voluminous gown to match her large head. The White Rabbit with watch and waistcoat, wore stuffed white wool pants and white boots to give the semblance of rabbit fur. Costumes for the King and Knave of Hearts, the Fish and Frog Footmen, the Mad Hatter and the March Hare, etc., were all assembled from anything and everything that could be found. The imaginations and untiring work of the costume committee made them successful in providing perfect costumes for all the cast.

MUSIC—THE TECHNICAL CREW by *David Geel and Ann Hockey.*

Music in a dramatic production is a very important factor. Ideal musical continuity as has been proved most vividly in films, is not noticed by the audience, but remains an underlying "feeling" which the audience experiences without being aware of it. The music must be of sufficient intensity to be heard clearly, yet be sufficiently low so that it does not prevent the audience from hearing the actors.

With this thought in mind, we tackled the problem of the music for the year's production. First we looked for a public address system in which the amplifier provided the clearest, truest tone. We used the newly designed "Reluctance" pick-ups, which, although they provided a very low output, give the greatest clarity of any pick-up yet designed in the low priced field. The amplifier necessarily had a pre-amp to boost the output of the pick-ups. We used two pick-ups, mounted on a board on either side of the amplifier. The next problem was where to install the speaker for balance, and where to in-



stall the amplifier for the convenience of the operator. After much discussion and many attempts we finally suspended the speaker above the acting area. In this way the sound actually seemed to come from the actors, making it a vital part of them and of the play. As to the placement of the amplifier and turntables, we solved that problem easily with the co-operation of the lighting-crew. They gave us a portion of the auditorium cat-walk, thus affording us an excellent view of the stage so that we were able to fit the music in at the precise moment.

After a great deal of trouble, we finally raised the amplifier, two pick-ups, and the board on which they were mounted, up to the cat-walk. We stabilized the board on the extreme right-hand side of the "cat" at an angle, just sufficient for one operator to be able to reach both turn-tables and the control switches on the amplifier, and also be able to observe the stage clearly.

The amplifier itself was specially constructed for stage work. There was a special "cueing" system, which worked on ear-phones. There was a large and very sensitive volume control for each pick-up between which was a three-position switch. The switch operated in this fashion: in neutral position both pick-ups fed to the amplifier, and out into the auditorium. In the right position the output of the pick-up on the right was fed straight to the ear-phones without going out into the auditorium. In this manner any portion of the music can be "cued" to a split second. Similarly, the left pick-up can be used for "cueing" by putting the three-position switch to the left, and at the same time music being played on the right-hand turn-table can be heard through the speaker.

As the play progressed, we found this system to be almost perfect. The balance of the music was very delicately controlled by the operator who heard the speech of the actors as well as the music.

DRAMATIZATION by Lois Ansell.

Alice in Wonderland has, under its

humorous and ridiculous qualities, a very deep theme. As Alice dreams her dream about queer creatures who boss her, scold her and look down on her by turns, she is expressing the feelings that all children have as they are ordered about in the world of adults. Certain lines in the plays such as, "Speak when you are spoken to!", "Turn out your toes when you walk!", "Open your mouth wider when you speak!", "You don't know much, and that's a fact," no doubt had all been said to Alice many times before, and that was why she dreamed of them. A highly imaginative child, she subconsciously protested against these elders who were constantly telling her how to behave. By making them into ridiculous creatures who tell her foolish things, she shows a child's impression of adults in general. In this way Lewis Carroll gently ridiculed pompous, blundering, meddlesome adults, and proved that children are much smarter than these adults.

Western's version of *Alice in Wonderland* was not taken from any play already written. This was tried and they proved unsatisfactory. The final plan was to take those scenes from the book itself which best suited the facilities of our stage. These scenes were dramatized according to our own ideas. This proved to be very successful, and it also eliminated royalties.

Alice in Wonderland played four nights, from Wednesday to Saturday, and a Saturday matinee for children. It could not have been presented without the full co-operation of every Drama student. There were no stars in the production—every part was of equal importance, whether long or short. And the back stage workers, the lighting technicians, stage crew, etc., were every bit as necessary as the actors in making this performance successful. If praise or credit goes to anyone, it should go to Miss Betty Mitchell, whose brilliant directing and unfailing devotion to the stage kept us all going and made it possible for us to present another great play.

Western Canada Theatre Conference

August 17 and 18, 1949, at Banff

As the Dominion Drama Festival grows in stature and comes to concentrate on the encouragement of top-flight theatre it becomes increasingly apparent that an regrettable gap is developing between the few outstanding groups in any one region and the less fortunate ones. It is plain that the Dominion Drama Festival cannot concern itself with such problems. They are matters for the regions themselves. Our smaller groups, lacking the skill or ambition, or merely physical circumstances to bring themselves into the field of the Dominion Festival nevertheless are in dire need of encouragement, some of which might come from local or even western festivals.

This year the Western Canada Theatre Conference will offer a wonderful opportunity for discussion and action on just this problem, and any others that concern our theatre groups of all kinds and

sizes in the four western provinces. Every group that looks to achieve a respected place in its community and province should send one or more delegates to the conference. Below is presented a very tentative outline of the activities for the two days concerned. Suggestions for discussions on matters of interest to western theatre groups should be sent to the secretary of the conference, K. W. Gordon, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Sask.

This is your chance to meet the most active theatre workers in your own and neighboring provinces, to compare notes, or just simply "talk theatre." You will be able to be present at the stimulating theatre, music and art performances and exhibitions that go with the final week of the Banff School of Fine Arts (see back cover).

PROVISIONAL PROGRAM

WEDNESDAY, August 17th

9:00—Registration.

9:30—Welcome to Delegates.—Donald Cameron, Director of the Banff School of Fine Arts.

—Minutes and Reports.

—Report of Miss Mitchell's committee.—A provincial survey on the needs for dramatic activities in the four Western Provinces and the personnel presently available as instructors.

12:30—Lunch.

2:30- 3:00—Report of D.D.F. Annual Meeting and Executive Decisions for 1950. R. MacDonald.

3:00- 3:30—Whither the W.C.T.C.? Miss D. Somerset.

3:30- 4:30—The Case for Professional Directors for Community Drama Clubs. A representative from New Westminster, B.C.

—Free Evening for Committee Meetings.

THURSDAY, August 18th

9:30-10:30—Report on "Western Theatre Magazine." Robert Orchard.

10:30-11:30—Suggestions for a Western One-Act Festival. From Manitoba.

11:30-12:30—The Place of Departments of Health and Recreation in the Promotion of Drama. H. S. Hurn. (Discussion led by Mrs. Burgess).

12:30—Lunch.

2:00- 3:00—Suggestions for the Development of Speech-Training in Western Canada. Dr. Evangeline Machlin of the Banff School Staff.

3:00- 4:00—Report of Play Writing Contest and Plans for Next Year's Contest. K. W. Gordon.

4:00- 4:30—How Can the Western Provinces Help to Make the Calgary D.D.F. a Success? Discussion led by R. MacDonald.

4:30—Nomination of Provincial Executive Representatives.

8:00—Banff School Major Play Production.

ON THE PRACTICAL SIDE

Arena Style

Robert Orchard

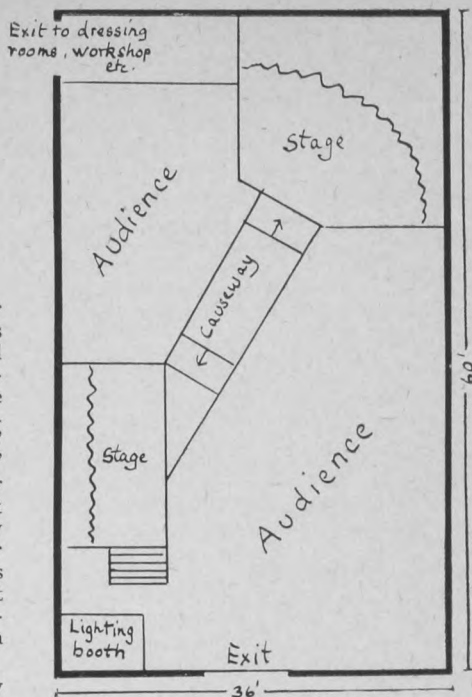
Theatre people are still groping for labels to describe the new prosceniumless style of production: it has been called variously "Theatre-in-the-round," "Central Staging," "Arena Style," "Penthouse Theatre" and other names as well, according as to how you react to it. "Flexible" or "peripatetic (walking about) Theatre," someone in England called it. Simply for the purpose of this article I shall call it "Arena," and by that I will mean any staging where the audience partially or totally surrounds the actors, or the actors the audience. Thus, apart from recent examples, both ancient Greek and Elizabethan Public Theatres were "Arena Style."

The "Penthouse Theatre" is a very special and limited form of "Arena" as its name implies, although it happens to be the form in which "Arena" was lately introduced into the United States. It is still the most usual form. "Penthouse" means the complete enclosure of the actors in a circle, oval or square by a small and intimate audience, such as might be found in a large drawing-room. It was originated by Glenn Hughes in a penthouse in Seattle. It is limited in that it imposes many more restrictions on the style of performance than does the conventional proscenium stage, but this is not necessarily a disadvantage.

The other extreme, when a different stage (or stages) is designed for each production, was first encountered at Okhlopkov's Realistic Theatre in Moscow during the middle thirties. The production about to be described falls into this category, the category of "Flexible Staging" rather than "Penthouse."

A penthouse production was given in an Edmonton School last year. An interesting and detailed account of it can be found in the "Stage Door" of May, 1948. The "Flexible" production was presented in a 60' by 36' hut on the campus of the University of Alberta as part of last Summer's Theatre workshop.

There happened to be a stage, but it was in pieces: platform sections and trestles. Rather than have it set up in advance the instructor waited until the class in Directing had begun to discuss the plays that were to be performed, but it was first of all assumed that the stage would be erected in a conventional manner across the end of the hall. Very soon



a serious problem arose in connection with the two distinct locales demanded by two of the plays: "The Peace" of Aristophanes and the English Medieval mystery of "Abraham and Isaac." In the former, the old farmer, Trygaeus, seeking peace for a troubled world, makes a journey from earth to heaven. In the latter Abraham and his son journey from their home to the Hill of Sacrifice. There was not enough height above the stage to make adequate distinction in levels between the two locales. Since these problems led directly to the shape and position of the stage as originally conceived, it was suddenly realized that with the stage not yet built, its size, shape and position were still a matter of choice. In very short time the overall design began to emerge as consisting of two stages, one in a corner and the other half way down the opposite side, connected by a causeway one foot lower than the stages and having ramps at either end. The audience sat on either side of the causeway. It was then very simple for one stage (the smaller) to become Trygaeus' farm or Abraham's house, and the other the abode of the gods or the Hill of Sacrifice. The journeys to and fro took place on the causeway. The other items in the production were played either on one stage or the other, making for quick changes.

When an audience is sitting on all or most sides of the players a spot-light well placed from the point of view of one group of onlookers is apt to be shining full in the faces of another. But with careful juggling effective lighting can still be obtained. Most of the spots will have

to be masked with tin funnels and set rather close to the vertical than is normal. Any furniture or scenery used will have to be specially arranged so as not to obstruct the view of essential business from any member of the audience. The masking of one actor by another in respect to one section of the audience is inevitable, though less of a problem than might be imagined since a number of the accepted rules of the conventional stage are invalidated by the absence of proscenium. The intimacy of audience and actor mitigates loss of emphasis from casual masking. Moreover, a careful director will not permit his actors to remain long in masking positions but will keep them moving.

It is difficult to describe the special quality that emerges from this style of theatre. It is suited to a very wide variety of plays from Aeschylus to Noel Coward. It is undoubtedly a very effective way of arousing the excited participation of the audience. The impact is sometimes more physical than psychological, such as when Trygaeus on his way to heaven swung on his "beetle horse" over the cringing heads of the audience, or when the stones that covered the effigy of "Peace" were rather too energetically thrown aside and fell into the laps of the nearest spectators. But no matter how accustomed one may be to the "peep-hole" stage "it takes a theatre goer about thirty seconds" as Brooks Atkinson of the New York Times said recently, "to realize that central staging is no stunt but a legitimate style of producing, and that it has positive values which cannot be duplicated on the conventional stage."

Arena style is something to be explored at some time by every enterprising group,

young or old, in school or out of school. If you have no stage at all try the "pent-house" variety. If you have a temporary stage, build it to suit the action. If you have a permanent stage try putting the audience on the stage and the players in the audience, or extending the stage on causeways through the audience (in the manner of the Japanese Kabuki Theatre) or around the sides of the audience. But whatever you do, whatever style of stage you use, with or without proscenium, **justify it** as a legitimate means of expressing what the play is about in accordance with the degree of flexibility at your command.

It is not easy to find written accounts of Arena style since its present development is so new. You can of course find books that explain how it worked in Ancient Greece, Medieval Europe, and Shakespeare's England. Such accounts are full of suggestions for present-day attempts, although the invention of the electric spot light has given us more freedom and flexibility than our forerunners ever had. For an account of Penthouse Style read Glenn Hughes' "The Penthouse Theatre" (published by Samuel French Ltd., Toronto and New York.) You can read good accounts of Okhlopkov's experiments in "Moscow Rehearsals" by Norris Houghton (published by Harcourt Brace, New York) or in "Theatre in Soviet Russia" by Andrew Van Gysegheem (published by Faber and Faber, London).

DANCE-A-DOWN, 16th century ballad in mime and verse chorus, at University of Alberta's 1948 Summer Session.



Local News

MANITOBA

Drama in rural Manitoba being in a parlous state after the war, a small group of citizens met at the University and decided to revive the Manitoba Drama League which had ceased operations in 1942. For the last year or so it has been a general uphill drive to get the League and its facilities known among the rural points.

It is understandable that some groups are rather timid about entering festivals when they know that they will come up against experienced and practiced groups from Winnipeg, St. Boniface and Brandon, all of whom have been D.D.F. finalists. In order to overcome this two festivals have been set up: the first is the Regional Festival of the D.D.F. and the second is the regular Manitoba Provincial Drama Festival. The first festival is open only to senior experienced groups in the province and is on invitation. The other festival is open to the groups who have had less opportunity and experience. No group which has taken part in the Regional Festival can enter in any of the sub-festivals, or in the Provincial Finals.

Manitoba is divided into some twenty districts with an organizing secretary in each part, and these districts have smaller festivals of their own, the winner of which competes in the provincial finals, which were held this year on the second, third

and fourth of June.

Interest is running high in the province itself with respect to the production of plays, but rural groups feel that the chief hindrance is their lack of experience. In many cases they have to start from the very beginning. The Drama League has a valuable play library which members may use. Also through the co-operation of the Physical Fitness Division of the Provincial Department of Health and Public Welfare the League is enabled to send teams out into country districts to conduct short courses in drama. The response this year from rural groups has been most enthusiastic.

As in other parts of the west, the long winters make it difficult to travel to many of the smaller towns and much of the work has to be done in the spring and fall. In addition, the lack of more than two or three centers of over fifteen thousand population makes it difficult to hold local festivals, and groups in the north find trouble in coming in to a festival in Winnipeg. Nevertheless drama in Manitoba is progressing and theatre people look forward with eager anticipation to the now not very distant day when there will be a provincial government agency to handle the needs of the various groups, and when the University shall have its own drama department.

SASKATCHEWAN

SASKATOON.

The Saskatoon Little Theatre Club, of which Harry McKinnon is president gave a night of one act plays at the Ukrainian Hall during the winter. This group rents a basement room for six months of the year as rehearsal room, club room and workshop, but their work is very much handicapped by the usual lack of adequate stage and hall space. The movie houses charge too high a rent and the collegiates are not available.

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UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN.

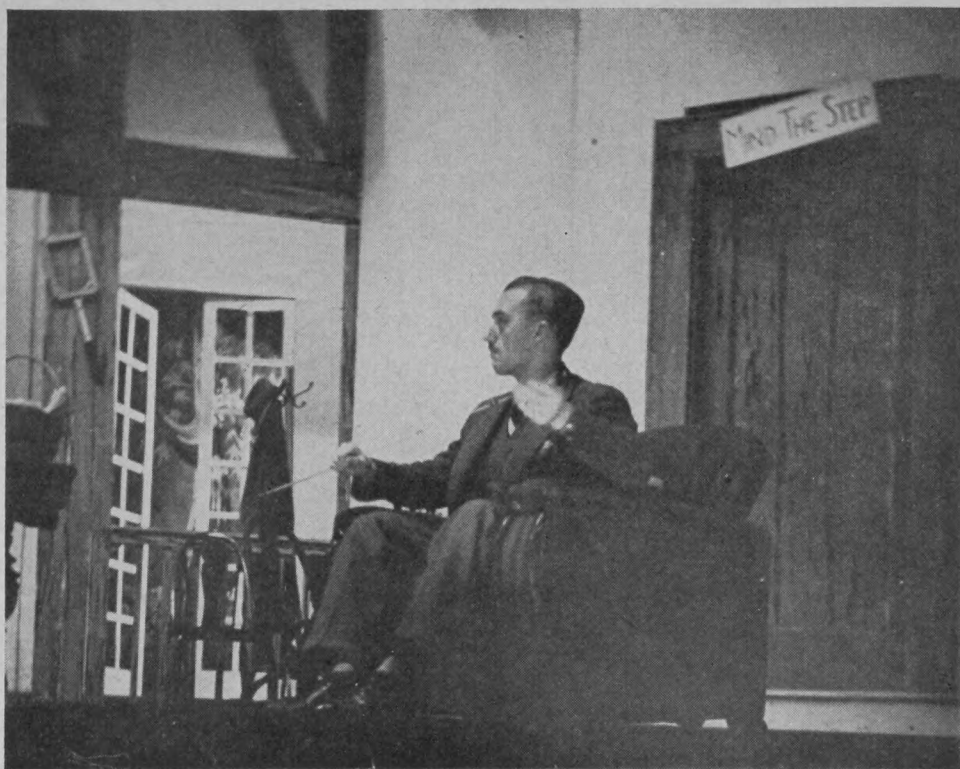
The Drama Department of the University of Saskatchewan produced Galsworthy's "Escape" in Convocation Hall for three days in February. Professor Emerys Jones directed and the settings and properties were designed by the technical director Frank Holroyd and constructed by his students in stagecraft.

The Drama Department also sponsors the Western Stage Society which is manned and operated by the department's staff and students. They are touring the province again this summer from May 13th to September 17th with Robert Gard's "Raising the Devil," Boissoneau and Chapman's "To What Purpose" and Morton's "Box and Cox." There are four men and four women in the cast and they travel in a limousine with trailer. (See elsewhere in this issue for Professor Jones' account of last summer's successful tour).

* * *

The University students held their usual "College Nights" festival late in the fall. This takes the form of a competition of one act plays presented by the various faculties. This year it lasted four nights and there were 12 plays. The adjudicator was Mrs. Haynes of Edmonton.

* * *



QUIET WEEK-END, directed by Kay Kritzwiser for the Regina Little Theatre.

HIGH SCHOOL FESTIVAL.

The cast from the Convent of Sion, Saskatoon, playing "A Room in the Tower" won provincial honors in the High School festival competition, Regina, March 16. Over 75 schools competed in home, local, zone and semi-final competitions. "Ralph," written and directed by Mrs. Murray Clements, Workshop group, Regina, won southern honors but lost out in the finals. Lebrecht Indian School presented "Kings of Nomania" as an exhibition piece, with a cast of 39 public and high school students under the direction of E. J. Doll, as a curtain-raiser before 1,000 school trustees in annual convention.

* * *

REGINA.

Members and directors of the cast of "Private Lives"—Regina Little Theatre and winners of the Saskatchewan region in the Dominion Drama Festival—attended the presentation of the winning plays in Toronto in late April. This was made possible by the efforts of Norman Browne, regional chairman of the Saskatchewan Drama League and generous Regina citizens and business firms.

* * *

SCHOOL FESTIVALS.

Many school units have held non-competitive drama festivals during the past season. In many instances superintendents of schools feel that this is the best procedure until the students learn the

methods of adjudication and gain some experience. Then, participation in competitive festivals will give them the yardstick with which to measure their achievements.

* * *

DRAMA FESTIVAL OF THE AIR.

The Third Annual Drama Festival of the Air brought to CKBI listeners five days of Drama. Eight plays were heard in the evenings and five in the afternoons. The afternoon plays were part of the first junior festival to be aired over CKBI. Three of them came from high schools from around Prince Albert. The winners of the junior festival cup were Nipawin with their "Miss Seventeen." J. Farrell, well known Saskatoon playwright and drama enthusiast, adjudicated the senior festival. His adjudication was heard in a separate half hour program. As winning play Mr. Farrell chose "The Mill of the Gods," presented by the Prince Albert Players and directed by Doris Donnelly. One of the interesting features about the festival was the Family Players led by Percy Slater who chose a cast from his own family.

In order to produce the show in one week a play was recorded at the studio each night of the previous week. In this way only three live plays were handled during the festival week. This festival is presented each year by Radio Station CKBI in an effort to further city and country drama. The radio station supplied

all the plays, sound effects, music and radio time. If advice is requested it is given by the festival director who this

year was Spencer Moore. The radio station at Yorkton has held a similar festival with good results.

ALBERTA

EDMONTON

Edmonton Community Theatre and Calgary Civic Theatre got together earlier this year and arranged an exchange of plays. Edmonton took their production of "Life With Father" to play two nights in Calgary, and Calgary brought "Gas Light" to Edmonton for a similar two nights. The experiment seems to have been very successful and it is hoped that some similar arrangement can be made for next season. There were courses in stage craft, make-up and acting. Three lectures on Shakespeare were given by Mr. Alan Hood, and the play-reading groups were attended regularly all season. A production of the "Merry Wives of Windsor" was planned for March, but had to be postponed.

* * *

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA.

The Drama Division of the Department of Fine Arts in the University opened their new Theatre with a production of four one-act plays, "Breeches from Bond Street," by the Alberta playwright, Elsie Park Gowan; "Sordid Story," by J. A. S. Coppard; "The White Man and the Mountain," by Robert Orchard, a poetic play specially written for the opening, and J. M. Morton's "Cox and Box." The Studio Theatre is a converted "Cowan" hut, with a stage twenty-four feet deep by thirty-five wide; the proscenium opening is twenty feet wide and ten feet high. The auditorium will seat one hundred and fifty people in comfort. In a later issue of this magazine, the editors hope to give a more detailed description of the conversion of this hut into a theatre. A workshop and rehearsal room has been constructed out of a similar "Cowan" hut next door.

The University Drama Society's major production was "Romeo and Juliet," directed by Alwyn Scott, a student in The Faculty of Law. Costumes were lavish and colorful and a special stage was built out into the centre of Convocation Hall in order to carry the action into the laps of the audience.

The Inter-year competition was won with a poetic play, "Rain," written by an Arts Student, Violet Ulasovetz. The production employed two dancers, and matched the sensitivity of the writing. In spite of its unusual nature this play also won the popular vote. An encouraging effort all round!

Under the auspices of the Department of Extension at the University, Robert Stuart conducted a course in Elementary Acting two evenings a week throughout the winter and spring. Plans are now being made to hold a similar course and also one in Directing. These will be held in the new Studio Theatre and workshop,

but will be organized by the Extension Department.

* * *

CALGARY.

Workshop 14 confined their activity this year very largely to the preparation of their Dominion Drama Festival entry which won the regional festival and received so much praise from the regional adjudicator (see page 13).

The close runner up at the regional festival was the Calgary Civic Theatre's "Gas Light," by Patrick Hamilton, directed by Douglas Doherty. The adjudicator, Robert Speight, described it as a "first-class performance" that "thoroughly deserved to be seen by a wider public."

Western Canada High School staged Elmer Rice's "Street Scene." Betty Mitchell directed.

* * *

BANFF AND MEDICINE HAT.

Both the Medicine Hat Little Theatre Association and the Banff Literary and Dramatic Club ran into difficulties during the last season. Productions had to be cancelled and postponed in both clubs owing to illness among the members of the cast. However, the Banff group went ahead with a season's planned study of acting techniques and some Shakespeare work. Medicine Hat hoped to open their season with a minstrel show and great disappointment was caused among the members when it had to be postponed. "Ladies in Retirement" was presented in December on one of the coldest nights in the year (around 20° below).

* * *

ALBERTA DRAMA LEAGUE.

The new executive of the A.D.L. is made up of: Miss Betty Mitchell, president; Mr. Richard MacDonald, vice-president; Mr. Frank Glenfield, secretary-treasurer. The League have plans for affiliation with various groups in Alberta for mutual aid. Drama Groups in Alberta will be hearing more of this later in the year.

* * *

"WORKSHOP" ABROAD.

As an example of one group's contribution to Theatre and Radio in this country—and in others, alas!—we wish to present the latest news on some of Workshop 14's Alumni.

Gordon Atkinson, who directed Workshop's Festival entrees, "The Wood Carver's Wife" ('47), and "Pierre Pathelin" ('48), is doing well in Pasadena. In addition to his studies he has been assistant director for the Playhouse production of "Antigone," doing the choreography, music and costumes for the play. He is, at the moment, directing "The Merchant of Venice" and working on an original 55

minute script of Dante's "Divine Comedy" as a project in music. His role of Herod in the Christmas Nativity play was highly spoken of.

Conrad Bain passed through Calgary this fall en route to New York after a brief holiday at the Coast. He is now a professional character actor in N.Y. (he says he is not "star material") and has been making a very good living in radio, television and stock. His wife, a talented artist, has just finished the sets and costumes for two television shows.

Dorothy Unsworth Merriman and her poet husband are on Radio Station KVNJ, in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Betty Ballantine is in radio in Vancouver, John Rivet and his wife, formerly Ellawyne Narraway, one of Workshop's best commedienettes, are studying at the University of Washington in Seattle.

Joan Ryan is playing at the Cambridge Theatre, London, England; for, in addition to unusual acting ability, she is the

possessor of a fine singing voice. Marjorie McKenna Sage has had a triumph playing the lead in London Little Theatre's production of "Dream Girl." She is traffic manager of London's radio station and is doing some writing. Ann Makar, after winning a bursary at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, has recently been awarded a \$500 scholarship for '49. Virginia Harding appears as Madame Louise in the Vancouver Little Theatre production of "Therese" at the York Theatre during October. Al and Clare Bestall are in radio in Moncton, N.B.

Irene Powlan recently graduated from Madame Marie Ouspenskaya's American Repertory Theatre. While studying at the A.R.T. she played "Rosalind" for Charles Laughton in his production of "As You Like It." Vic Fergie has joined the staff of the radio station at Port Alberni, B.C. And in Calgary, Don McDermid, Don Fox, Ron Rosvold, David Penn, Doug Short are doing work in local radio studios.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

NEW MAGAZINE.

The School and Community Drama Branch of the B.C. Dept. of Education has just published the second issue of its new printed magazine known as "British Columbia Drama." The first was published in the fall. This represented an amalgamation of two separate mimeographed bulletins, the one concerned with schools and the other with communities. The editor is Mr. H. S. ("Bunny") Hurn, director of school and community drama in the provincial Department of Education.

This is a most outstanding publication, well illustrated, containing articles on both general and local Theatre matters. Moreover it is free. It will prove itself invaluable within the province and will also be of much interest to people outside B.C., especially those concerned with school and community problems.

The magazine itself is evidence of the lively interest in Theatre all over the province, which interest has in great measure been due to the past efforts of the School and Community Drama Branch in Victoria and the Department of Extension at the University in Vancouver. We are indebted to this magazine for the majority of the notes which follow:

* * *

VANCOUVER LITTLE THEATRE.

Following their first production of the season which gained the club a lot of newspaper publicity, the Vancouver Little Theatre achieved a striking success with James Gow and Arnaud d'Usseau's "Deep Are the Roots." Directed with skill by Mr. Ian Dobbie, this play drew crowded houses to the York Theatre for a whole week.

JOHN OLIVER HIGH SCHOOL, VANCOUVER.

This school, which has long had a fine reputation for a high standard of theatrical production ventured far into more difficult byways this year. Their confidence in their ability to produce "The Barretts of Wimpole Street," was not misplaced for they gave a splendid performance. Much credit is due to Dick Harris and Jack Sparks for their competent direction.

* * *

NEW WESTMINSTER VAGABONDS.

The Vagabonds, who did so well in last year's B.C. Regional, chose for their first presentation this year Emlyn Williams' well-known psychological drama, "Night Must Fall." The Players, directed by Mr. Lambrett-Smith, proved quite equal to the task to the evident satisfaction of the large audiences attracted to the Duke of Connaught School Auditorium. Their production of the "Glass Menagerie" by Tennessee Williams won the B.C. Regional for this year and went on to Toronto to win the Dominion Drama Festival Plaque (see page 13).

Other active groups include Williams Lake School, the Cocquitlam High School Drama Club, St. Augustine's School and the Sea Island Self-Help Players. Mrs. A. Hepburn is doing fine work with a group of teen-agers at Beaver Point on Salt Springs Island. A group in the Northern city of Terrace, in conjunction with the Civic Centre Symphony Orchestra, entertained several hundred people with a concert which included three one-act plays. The St. Barnabas Players of Victoria, groups at Mission and Kamloops and the Victoria Little Theatre were all at work during the past season.

BOOKS

PRODUCING THE PLAY by John Gassner, together with the **NEW SCENE TECHNICIAN'S HANDBOOK** by Philip Barber. New York, The Dryden Press (Toronto Agents, The Ryerson Press). \$6.75.

There are far too many so-called "helpful" books on play production and general theatrecraft. The unwary and unsuspecting beginner must often be at a loss to choose one from the many hundreds on the market. Their scope ranges from discussion of pseudo aesthetic values to inadequate detailed accounts of how to make your own lighting equipment. One thumbs one's puzzled way through a wilderness of words and paper and is appalled by the amount of downright bad advice that finds its way into the world via these books.

With the publication of "Producing the Play," the necessity for publishing more books on this subject should cease for a goodly number of years. Mr. Gasner has collected experts around him. Every branch of theatre work is covered in this book and every section of it has been written by the person best qualified to do it.

The advice given is cogent and to the point. All the contributors are professional workers in the theatre; the knowledge they pass on so freely has been gained from actual experience while earning their bread and butter. The point of view is professional and the book can be studied with profit by any person who earns his living in the theatre.

It might be said that this book is too professional in its point of view; that it is not written in simple enough terms for the very beginners. The answer to that is that this book is aimed at those people who want to improve their work, to give it the stamp of expert quality that most professional work has. The beginners who are serious about their work in theatre will adapt themselves quickly enough to make this book one of their most treasured possessions.

"Producing the Play" is not a new book, but it is the only one of its kind that I feel can be recommended wholeheartedly. It is reviewed here for the purpose of making it more widely known to those who are searching for such a book. The chapter on Actor Training by Lee Strasberg is particularly rewarding. So is that on directing by Worthington Miner. "The Stage Technician's Handbook" which is also incorporated should prove invaluable to all stage crews.

You won't find information here on how to convert a biscuit box into a spotlight, but you will find excellent advice on all branches of theatre that go towards producing a play.

—S. TREBOR.

CANADIAN SCHOOL PLAYS—
Series One, edited by Emrys Maldwyn Jones, Toronto, The Ryerson Press. \$1.40.

SHAKESPEARE FOR YOUNG PLAYERS—A junior course, by Robertson Davies, illustrated by Grant Macdonald. Toronto, Clarke, Irwin and Co., Ltd. 50c.

Teachers and recreation workers are always asking for suitable plays for youngsters. These two books are intended to supply their needs. They go further than that, for both of them set out to introduce young people to two fundamentals of our Theatre: Canadian playwrights and Shakespeare.

Professor Emrys Jones, head of the Drama Department at the University of Saskatchewan, has collected nine plays by Canadian authors which have not hitherto been easily available to schools. It is perhaps regrettable that only two of them, Gwen Pharis Ringwood's delightful "The Courting of Marie Jenvrin" and John MacNaughton's "Final Edition" have a definitely Canadian locale and theme. From the point of view of increasing our awareness of our own way of life, the Canadian theme is perhaps of more importance than the Canadian writer. But good plays on Canadian themes are all too scarce. It is important that a book of plays by our own writers, no matter what they write about, is being made available to a wide public of young people. Our playwrights need every encouragement.

The lack of competent playwrights writing on Canadian themes can only be matched by the lack of directors, in school or out, who can take a script and evolve their own production from it. Themselves incapable of creative work they require that "railway lines" be laid down for them in special acting editions, the layout of scenes and all the stage business carefully indicated. Professor Jones has acknowledged this very general state of affairs and given copious staging notes, though I am sure that he would be the first one to agree that they should not be strictly adhered to when a director happens to have reasonable ideas of his own. But our Canadian playwrights will only be given a fair trial when there are more directors who know enough about the craft of Theatre to be their own interpreters of the script. It would be a poor commentary on our musical education were it necessary to publish the score of a Beethoven Sonata together with instructions as to how to move your fingers.

This of course, is a criticism levelled at national ignorance of Theatre rather than at this book, for Professor Jones must be complimented on his selection of varied and lively plays well suited to young actors who are quite free to do them anyway they (or their teachers) like.

Robertson Davies is not only editor of a prominent Ontario newspaper, but he is rapidly becoming known throughout

Theatrical Costumes
Wigs
Make-up

MALLABAR COSTUMER

Winnipeg

Toronto

Montreal

Canada as a very accomplished playwright. For two years running he has won the Dominion Drama Festival's award for the best Canadian play in the festival. In introducing young people to the plays of Shakespeare "as painlessly as possible" he has achieved an admirable simplicity and directness. While a goodly number of points derived from modern Shakespearean scholarship are explained in notes and introductions, there is none of the old and sterile "bardolatry" which is still hard at work in our schools stifling a love of Theatre at its noblest and best.

"In order to understand these scenes you must **act** them," Mr. Davies tells the student, and the greater part of the book is concerned with the **acting** of the selected scenes. Yet he does not give instructions as to how they should be staged. He explains the peculiar qualities of the Theatre and performance of Shakespeare's own day, but otherwise confines himself to simple stage directions, to the elucidation of difficult words and passages, and, most important of all, to some of the reasons why the characters speak and behave the way they do.

In making these selections Mr. Davies has deliberately refrained from playing down to the immature talents of boys and girls. He has included some of Shakespeare's greatest scenes—from "Macbeth," "Hamlet," "Twelfth Night," and others—when Shakespeare is at his most exciting. Anyone who has seen a no more than adequately inspired performance of Shakespeare by youngsters will know that they can extract from his lines and situations a great deal more of the original verve and cadence than can the majority of our high-souled amateurs and tedious travelling professionals.

Mr. Davies has quite a bit to say about Shakespeare's poetry—his lyrics and sonnets, as well as his blank verse—since it is an inseparable part of Shakespeare's sense of Theatre. Typical of the book, and very sensible to boot, is the suggestion that the student write a few lines of blank verse on his own account, saying who he is and what he is doing at school.

Taken in the spirit in which it is presented, this book can not be but a splendid influence, and together with Professor Jones' collection of Canadian plays, should be on the shelves of every English speaking school in Canada in sets of a dozen or more, their pages well thumbed by young actors in rehearsal.—R.H.G.O.

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Festival Week At Banff

Banff School of Fine Arts

Wednesday, August 10th—Opening of Western Canada Writers' Conference.

Friday, August 12th—Opening night of 17th Annual Banff School Festival Week, with presentation of three new Canadian plays.

Saturday, August 13th—Repeat performance of new Canadian plays.

Monday, August 15th—

2:30 p.m.—Scrip readings and studio productions of new Canadian plays.

8:30 p.m.—Recital by students of the Piano Division.

Tuesday, August 16th—3:00 p.m., Opening of exhibition of paintings and handicrafts.

Wednesday, August 17th—Banff School Choir. Opening of Western Canada Theatre Conference (see page 17).

Thursday, August 18th—First performance of the major play production.

Friday, August 19th—Second performance of major play. Closing of Exhibition.

Saturday, August 20th—Closing of school.

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